



by Paola Bortini

TRANSLATING COMPASS INTO ITALIAN

This article is the story of the long and very interesting process of translating COMPASS into Italian. To talk about translation is actually to limit the scope of the experience. If I can start from the beginning, everything started in December 2002 when the first national training course on training for trainers on human rights education took place in Palermo, bringing together some 24 "trainers" from all over Italy. The training was a great opportunity for many to get to know about human rights, the Council of Europe, training and youth work. The team thought that to run a training course in Italian instead of English would have been easier, but actually it was not.

Language, translation or concept?

The issue of language came out very clearly from the beginning of the training course: how to translate certain words or concepts from English into Italian when presenting COMPASS, which terms to use when talking of youth work, non-formal education and especially youth workers. It must be said that in Italy there are different schools which use different terminology. When I talk about different schools I mean that at university level there are different ways of teaching social work and there is no agreed concept of youth work. We discussed this and we listed 5 words – *operatore, educatore, animatore, responsabile, assistente* – that are commonly used for translating youth worker in different contexts and situations, but there was no consensus about them. In fact, groups of participants gave exactly the opposite meaning to some of these words. So what was to be done? How were differences to be accommodated, how were some concepts to be made understandable to all the different schools and traditions of working with young people on either a professional or a voluntary basis? In the end a consensus was reached by defining concepts more than words and giving a commonly agreed definition to the words "*attività educative*", meaning organised activities with educational aims and objectives regardless of who was in charge of them, and "*facilitatori*", meaning the people who are in charge of organising or delivering/implementing such activities at different levels. It was then up to each individual present at the course to translate the concepts into their local reality.

Many translators, one revision team, a person responsible for final checking and harmonisation and some outside experts

In spite of all this, the enthusiasm about COMPASS was so high by the end of the training course that the participants made one big request to the team: to have COMPASS translated into Italian, to experiment with it and to come back with a deepened understanding of the educational approaches contained in it. The request came with an offer: almost all of the participants took some pages of the manual and volunteered to translate them. The team of trainers looked at each other and silently agreed: "*Why not? COMPASS in itself is a collection of exercises and articles written by different authors, so to have many translators and a range of different styles should not be such a big problem*". So this is how we started! Almost all the participants chose according to their interests and abilities and the Associazione pro-Pentedattilo took a leading role in co-ordinating the process. What we got were of course the most incredible translations, with huge differences in style, appropriateness of language and creativity. When the revision team (*actually almost all the trainers*) met in June 2003 to look at the translations received and to decide how to continue, it was clear that the differences were of great help in deciding on how to translate key recurrent words and especially titles. We shared the revision of the text, deciding that each of us should do a first revision and that a second person should then do a second reading, just to assess the language.

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY



We almost managed, considering the pressure of time, the need for expertise in human rights, experience of youth work and knowledge of treaties, conventions and covenants, and especially the huge variety of topics addressed in the manual, which called for a very wide range of knowledge and competencies. That's why in the end, as co-ordinator of the final version, I asked outside "experts" to give advice on some specific topics in order to be sure about the proper translation. In addition, I spent quite some time doing research on the internet consulting specialised websites to make sure that certain terms were correct.

► Who pays for what?

All that was done voluntarily: it was clear from the beginning that there would be no money to pay for the translation, revision and co-ordination work. Publication was still outstanding, but fortunately a publishing house offered to cover the cost of it and to reward the translators with 500 copies of COMPASS, which it was decided to use for further training activities and to send to the course participants and to everybody involved in one way or another in the translation and revision work. I have not counted how many times I read COMPASS in English, French and Italian, I have not counted how many hours I spent translating and retranslating, checking, making the sentence more "Italian", adding a note, looking at the listed websites, contacting people to ask for suggestions, and reading similar books to see how certain concepts were translated.

Translating COMPASS was an investment in knowledge, in getting to know many interesting and striking human rights-related aspects of life. The fact that the translation process was long also had a number of advantages: ideas had time to take shape,

exercises were tried out in different contexts and therefore a better translation could be made, better comments could be added, and factual information could be updated. So I hope that the final product is a valid contribution to human rights education in Italy, making available a collective experience and bringing new ideas and new terminology.

► The work is never over

At the last course on human rights education in December 2003, participants started speaking about a "**COMPASS educational approach and methodology**", which sounds wonderful as they got the message about the effort put in to make it something special, but which is at the same time very demanding as there is still a lot of work to do and material to incorporate in order to make the COMPASS educational approach and methodology something substantial and fully usable. That is our next challenge, to add and supplement.

The first course triggered a multiplier effect, the mailing list is intensively used for sharing information and experience on human rights education, and there is a plan to create a permanent COMPASS Italian website where all the material can be found. I have found this process very much in line with the aim of COMPASS, namely giving a direction, pointing out and then finding ways to get there and discovering new ways.

My final advice to those who are planning to translate COMPASS is to not undertake the translation simply as a job (*paid or not, it's your choice*), but as a unique opportunity to find out more about the world of human rights and thus contribute towards better human rights education in Europe.



► **The team of trainers at the December 2002 training course was :**

- Paola Bortini,
- Agnese Ciulla,
- Mario D'Agostino,
- Silvia Volpi.

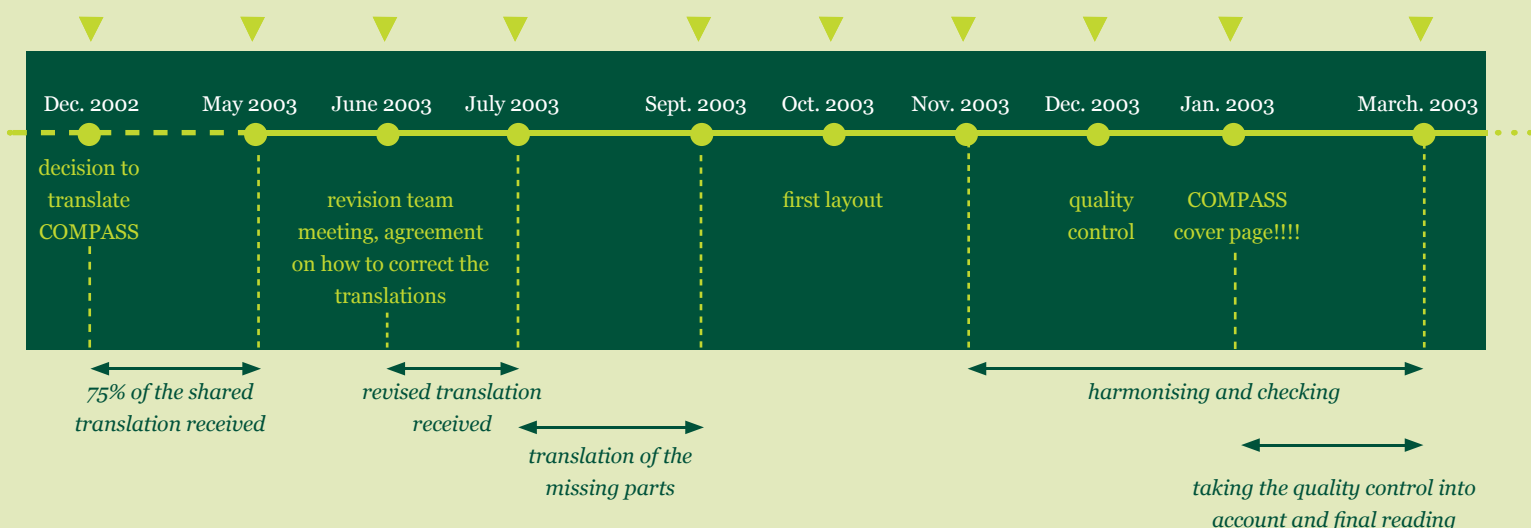
► **The revision team was :**

- Paola Bortini,
- Mario D'Agostino,
- Giuseppe Candolfo,
- Mariam Yassin,
- Silvia Volpi.

The names of all the translators are:

- Marta Benettin (Unimondo),
- Paola Bortini (Associazione pro-Pentedattilo),
- Francesco Campagna (Apriti Cuore onlus - Palermo),
- Sabrina Carlotto (Agenzia di Ricerca Creativa Intercultura e Diritti Umani),
- Moira D'Amelio (Servizio Civile Internazionale),
- Marco De Angelis and Elisabetta Lascari (La Fenice),
- Federica Ferretti (Centro di Solidarietà di Reggio Emilia),
- Fabrice le Floch and Maria Teresa Bellini (Youth Express Network),
- Mariam Yassin (Young Women from Minorities),
- Maria Piccio (Mani Tese),
- Juri Pertichini and Evelina Farris (Arciragazzi),
- Elvira Corona (Aiesec Cagliari),
- Marianna Pace (Mani Tese Campania onlus),
- Stefania Zamparelli and Silvia Volpi (Veb Accademia Europea),
- Novella Ricciuti (Istituto di Studi Giuridici Internazionali - Sezione Di Napoli sui Diritti Umani- CNR),
- Alessandro Valle and Andrès Peco (Archi Servizio Civile),
- Melania Zanetti and Paola Bonaga (Yourope),
- Gruppi Giovani di Amnesty International Sezione Italiana,
- Elena Ricci (Arciragazzi Firenze),
- Lisa Bacialli and Gilda Carina Conte (Eurotrain),
- Emilia Astore and Matteo Fornaca (Associazione Alouanur),
- Cristina Latella and Luciano Faso (Associazione pro-Pentedattilo, and Enrica Ottone (Pontificia Facoltà di Scienze dell'Educazione "Auxilium" - Roma) made valuable suggestions at the revision stage.

Timeline ...



Contact :



paola.bortini@tin.it

